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House of Representatives wants UN rapporteur Albanian not received this week after all

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The UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, will not officially visit the House of Representatives on Thursday. This decision was made by the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs.

At the request of GroenLinks-PvdA MP Piri, the committee approved her invitation on January 23rd. Many parliamentary groups, however, have since objected to this because of Albanian's statements about Israel.

The SGP took the lead in withdrawing the invitation. "As far as the SGP is concerned, it is unacceptable to actively invite such a person to the House of Representatives," said MP Van Dijk. The PVV concurred. "He is a Jew and Israel hater," said MP De Roon.

The VVD, which initially agreed to the invitation to the UN rapporteur, has also withdrawn. MP Van der Burg explained why: "It's tradition that we support each other in these kinds of invitations, even if we disagree. And the Netherlands is a member of the UN, and this person represents the UN."

"But," Van der Burg continued, "the UN rapporteur is now attacking my colleague, MP Van Dijk, on social media. And I've done more research into her statements and have no desire to listen to her."

Ugly politics

Ultimately, a large majority of the large MPs present wanted to withdraw the invitation to Albanese. "Politics can be so ugly," concluded SP parliamentary group leader Dijk. "There are all sorts of adults here, all mobilized to stop this. They should have spent that time thinking up critical questions."

Piri called it a hideous attempt to silence those who stand up for Palestinian rights. "In a healthy democracy, you also simply debate with people you disagree with," she told the other members of parliament. She appealed in vain to the VVD and the Christian Union "to uphold certain democratic mores."

Christian Union MP Ceder suggested to Piri that she organize the visit herself on behalf of her party. "I've also received people without the knowledge of the rest of the House." The House building can also be used for such a visit.

Also for lectures in the Netherlands

Albanian is not only in the Netherlands because of the now-withdrawn invitation from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. The UN rapporteur also gave a lecture this evening, titled "Genocide as Colonial Erasure," at the Dominican Church in Amsterdam.

The Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) has called for protests against her visit. A demonstration was also announced in The Hague for Thursday, the day she was scheduled to visit the House of Representatives.

Tomorrow, Albanese will deliver the first Dries van Agt lecture in The Hague at The Rights Forum, the foundation founded by the late former Prime Minister.

Albanian is controversial for her indirect comparisons of the Israeli government to the Nazi regime and Prime Minister Netanyahu to Hitler. She called the Gaza Strip "the largest and most scandalous concentration camp of the 21st century."

In interviews, she has questioned the rape of Israeli women during the massive Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, while the UN assumes so. The US, France, and Germany condemned her statements.

Refusal

Foreign Minister Veldkamp (NSC) rejected her request to speak with him during her visit to The Hague yesterday because of these remarks. "I refuse to see her," he told the NOS. His decision was a significant factor for many members of parliament.

In consultation with the minister, it has been decided to receive the UN rapporteur tomorrow at an official level, the ministry confirmed after earlier reports in De Telegraaf. Albanian will then hold discussions with officials from the ministry.

In addition, the UN rapporteur was invited by a group of government officials in his own capacity. The ministry emphasizes that this meeting was not held on behalf of the ministry.

Albanian Response

"From what I understand, the VVD came under strong pressure from the usual pro-Israel lobby, which is apparently also very strong in this country," Albanese told NOS before the lecture.

"I'm still going to be heard by the Dutch people," Albanese responded laconically when asked what she thought of the revoked invitation. "And I'm still going to talk to the parliamentarians who regret not being able to receive me at the official venue, so yeah."

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